

NUNNTIA

Newsletter

of the Congregation of the Mission

2021
MARCH



Congregation of the Mission
Communication Office

With a **WOMAN'S** name

All her life my mother worked in a school run by the Daughters of Charity and therefore my siblings and I always went to that school. I met many sisters there and I think each one of them marked part of my life in some way. In high school, a time of criticism and rebelliousness, one of them caught my attention... her name was Elsa. She was Uruguayan with thousands of health problems, especially in her legs. She was in charge of the girls who at that time lived in the school and of the candy sales during breaks. Sister Elsa had two characteristics, when she saw that you were not well, because of some exam or problem, she would call you and say: "Sobrino (nephew), what is wrong with you?" and with a piece of candy she would start the conversation and on the other hand, you would always, always see her smiling. Sitting in her armchair between the house and the chapel, Sister Elsa generated a little light in the school.

Until today I am still struck by the fact that so little is enough for a person to give so much, with a smile, to cause joy.

To be fair, I must say that Sister Elsa is not the only woman who marked my life.

I am witness to the courage of Maria, a young woman who, when she was crying while pregnant and with a boyfriend who gave her only one option, to undergo an abortion, took care of that child in the face of her family, her parish group and her own insecurity, staking everything on life.

I am a witness of the service of Antonia or Ruth who, leaving time with the family and even for delete leisure, prepared bags of food and clothes for the poor or visited them in their homes to have a share in their poverty.

I am a witness of Andrea's strength and how she has faced bureaucracy to get medicine for her quadriplegic son.

I am witness to the struggle of Miriam, Nora and others who despite being persecuted gained freedom for a village.

I am a witness of Norma's mortification, when I heard her say "you eat, I am not hungry" or Stella, that woman who looked negligent in her appearance

because the only things she had she gave to her children.

I am a witness of Marta's life who, being a grandmother, became a mother to her grandchildren. Or Roxana, a woman capable of looking with the eyes of a mother to the one who did not give birth.

I witness the mercy of Monica as she tearfully embraced her imprisoned son telling him that "no matter what you have done, whatever it is, I forgive you". I witness the faith of Josefina, a young mother who lost her one year old son and was able to stand with a broken heart but at the side of Jesus.

There are thousands of women like them who have given us back hope and joy. Thousands who have become the models of the way.

Today, thanks to one of them, we are witnesses of the resurrection, when we contemplate that woman who in the darkness of the night went to look for her Master, in spite of the sadness that was in her heart, who was able to recognize the voice of the Beloved even in pain, but above all, today we are witnesses of life thanks to the fact that, beyond her condition, she broke every social scheme to become the first missionary of the Risen One.

Many thanks to all the women who are part of our history and above all, many thanks to all those who pass on their faith in the Risen Christ to us.



P. Hugo Marcelo Vera, CM

Award in the category of **RECOGNITION FOR SOCIAL WORK**

#InternationalWomensDay

Many thanks to the entire administration of the Community of Madrid for this recognition I have received today on behalf of all the Daughters of Charity, mainly, but also on behalf of so many people, volunteers and staff, most of them women, who share our vision and I also dare to say on behalf of so many Church groups and Congregations doing the same work we do.

It has been a year, already a year, in which figures have been the main characters. We have added up the number of affected people, the number of deaths, the number of PCR tests, the number of vaccinations and, in the midst of all this, we wanted to add "words". What a difficult

operation! And the fact is that when we add the adverb "always" to the word "solidarity", so often used, there is a commitment that does not count the time, and when we add the compliment "with love" to this commitment, charity is born. A word we carry in our name: Daughters of Charity. Name with which we were baptized in the village in France at the beginning of the XVII century.

For us, charity is neither sentimentalism, as many people believe, nor a set of beneficial or relief actions; for us, charity is born of a conviction. And it is that the human being, as Saint Thomas said, is valuable, is dignified and has the right to develop integrally even if his history has been negative, even if he has made mistakes. For us, charity

has an end and that end is to build a new fraternity, because only from the fraternity and not from the programs the authentic equality and freedom are born. For us charity has one source and that source is Jesus Christ. Here I would like to echo the words of our Pope Francis from his recent encyclical Fratelli Tutti. In number 277 he says something very beautiful: "If the music of the Gospel ceases to sound in our homes, our public squares, in our beloved Madrid (my addition), then we will no longer hear the strains that challenge us to defend the dignity of every man and woman". For us, charity is inventive unto infinity, as our founder St. Vincent de Paul used to say, and as women of the Church we concretely work it out in the care of the fragile, but always looking for promotion and integration and we





do it in social centers as well as in educational centers and in residences. There are many frailties we take care of, which, moreover, have increased and worsened during this time of pandemic and we have not stopped taking care of them, although we have had to do it while taking care of many of our sisters who were also falling ill. We are women in the service of women, but not only... instead of listing the people we serve, if you allow me to speak a little longer, I brought brief testimonies of some of these people, of their example of overcoming their problems.

A former inmate says: In my life I have always chosen the worst, the worst path, the worst friends, I have fallen again and again and I have ended up in prison. How my mother has lamented over me! But I have always felt her forgiveness.

A homeless person says: alcohol left me down and out on the street. I've lost everything, I've felt totally rejected. I keep falling, but finding people I can trust helps me get up every day.

A migrant says: I came from Colombia nine years ago, leaving my family behind. I was offered training opportunities and today I have a job that has given me back the hope of being reunited with them one day.

And a victim of gender violence says: " I haven't slept since I got married. I have been so afraid for myself and my children. I suffered so many wounds and my self-esteem is so low that I have even thought about taking my own life, but in this house I have felt that God never fails, that He protects me and sends angels to me.

For us, getting close to all these people every day is a lesson of life and hope and this is our best reward.

Thank you very much.

*Sr. Eugenia González, D.C.
Visitatrix of the Madrid – Saint Vincent
Province of the Daughters of Charity*

BROTHER PACO

My name is Francisco Berbegal Vázquez. I am a Vincentian missionary. I am 47 years old, 24 years of vocation in the Congregation of the Mission and 19 years since I took my vows. Presently I live in Santa Marta de Tormes, Salamanca (Spain), in a huge building that was once a Vincentian seminary, where more than 240 missionaries were trained at one time, and where every year about 20 Vincentian priests were ordained to be sent to India, Philippines, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico...



In 2011, I was assigned here as formator in the Interprovincial Community of Initial Formation for then canonical Provinces of Barcelona, Madrid and Salamanca (September 2011 - September 2016). I took advantage of my service as a formator to pursue my studies for a degree in Psychology at the Pontifical University of Salamanca. I completed my studies with a master's degree in Counselling at the Centro de Humanización de la Salud, of the Camillians. At the same time I volunteered as a instructor at the Cáritas Diocesan Day Center for Drug Addicts in Salamanca.

In 2016, when I left formation ministry, I was appointed a community econome also responsible for the St. Vincent de Paul Center of Spirituality, as part of the building is a Spirituality Center, where all kinds of groups are welcomed for their spiritual, formative and group activities. Here there is also one of the provincial infirmaries, where twelve sick or elderly confreres are cared for. Likewise, I am a member of the Social

Pastoral Commission of the present Province [St. Vincent de Paul - Spain]. Since September 2017, I am responsible for the social work, the Mental Health Day Center of the Ranquines Project (for people with severe mental disorders in a situation of social exclusion), where I carry out roles of coordinator and psychologist. Over these years I have conducted different courses in Vincentian Spirituality, Social Doctrine of the Church, Missiology, lay involvement in the Church, elaboration and justification of development projects, systemic change. I have been involved in the educational pastoral of the Vincentian colleges. I have preached at a triduum, I have given many retreats and some spiritual exercises, including ones to the Daughters of Charity (perhaps the first Brother to do so). I spiritually accompany seminarians, religious, lay people and families.

Living my vocation as a Vincentian Brother

Many times I was asked: Why do you stay as a Brother and you do not become a priest? In such a question there is already a certain connotation of an inferior concept of the Brother: "you stay", you could go further, you could be more, but you stay in this inferior rank. They fail to realize Brother's vocation is a complete vocation in itself, with a theological, spiritual and ministerial content.

Moreover, this question distorts the reality of vocation. It implies that it is one who chooses his vocation, what he wants to be, without understanding that it is God who calls, who has dreamed up a vocation and offers it as a gift, as a complete offering.

I have always answered such a question with a little sarcasm: "I do want to be a priest, but it is God who does not want me to be that and He has given me this vocation as a Brother."

Br. Henry E. Escurel, C.M.

LIVING THE CONSECRATED LIFE

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines had declared the 2018 as the Year of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons. Many Catholics commonly think though that the religious ministry is divided into two categories only - the Clergy (Bishops, Priests, and Nuns) and the Laity (the ordinary members of the Church). But there is a ministry that often goes unnoticed and that is the Consecrated Persons.

One consecrated person who has been serving Adamson University for so many years now is Br. Henry E. Escurel, a member of the Congregation of the Mission or the Vincentians. Currently working as University Treasurer, Br. Henry as he is widely known, has been working since 1983 or for 25 years already, in the process of making him one of the well-loved and notable persons in the university.

To put things in the proper perspective, he pointed out the difference between a priest and a consecrated person. "Bishops, priests, and deacons belong to the ordained ministry, also known as the Clergy," he said, "whose function is to celebrate the Holy Mass and officiate other sacraments. On the other hand, a Brother or a Sister is a consecrated person who remains Lay but is consecrated to God. The Lay Religious, as they are called, stand in the middle of the Clergy and the Laity and profess the same vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience as the Clergy."

Brother Henry went on to share his life as a consecrated person, describing it with a word popularized by the 1964 film *Mary Poppins*: *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, which means extraordinarily happy or wonderful. Indeed, his wonderful consecrated life has made him

experience the love and care of a loving God. In relation to the different positions he held, his various responsibilities have opened up the world to him - letting him meet a lot of people of different status and class in the 31 countries that he has had the opportunity to visit and work in - from as near as Thailand and Japan to as far as Tunisia in Northern Africa. He has also drafted countless policies and documents for the university. In particular, as a consecrated person, he has contributed to the spread of the Word of God among Christians and non-Christians alike.

His journey started back in the time he was just in second year of high school in his hometown Gubat, Sorsogon in Bicol. As a young boy, he was always helping the Sisters belonging to the congregation known as the Daughters of Charity in distributing clothes and other relief items in their town's slums area during weekends or after the onslaught of calamities.



Apart of the relief operations during the weekends, the sisters also own the school where they teach in the weekdays. Eventually touched by their generosity and service, the boy innocently asked the Sisters if there were male members in their congregation because he wanted to formally join them. The Sisters' initial answer was a big laugh, but they nurtured his inclination and later they introduced him to the Vincentian priests and brothers. When his family learned about his choice to become a brother, their reactions were mixed. Some congratulated him for his newly-found vocation, others expressed their negative sentiments especially because the vocation of a brother, unlike that of a priest, which everyone is familiar with, is not well-understood and appreciated. Usually it is the priests who are approached for spiritual advice and concerns, not brothers. The dichotomy, as mentioned, between the Clergy and the Laity is that, many are not aware there are consecrated persons among them.

Br. Henry professed his permanent vows on July 2, 1972. He firmly believes that he did not choose the consecrated life but rather, God called him to live one. He believes it is through the consecrated life he can use his talents best in serving God and neighbor. But even with a renewed life, he remains the same person as before. He is still the same cheerful and helpful, yet thrifty, person who is not exempt from getting angry or feeling other basic human emotions. What changed in him as Lay-Religious is his vision of life. By his vow of poverty, he

became selfless and generous, being convinced that money is of no use in heaven. His vow of chastity gave him the freedom to freely embrace and give his love and service to more families and people. He also realized that his vow of obedience made him believe in the will of God rather than in his own.

But of course the Lay Religious life is not always all smiles and happiness. Br. Henry revealed that although he sometimes feels lonely, he never wishes he was married and had built a family. His vow of chastity, although the most challenging one, is a very precious gift to God that he really values.

A persistent learner, Br. Henry has earned a B.S. in Commerce degree from Adamson University, M.A. and Ph.D. in Education. These have served him in good stead as one of the longest-staying members of the Congregation of the Mission in the university who one time or another was assigned as treasurer, cashier, director of student assistants, teacher, registrar, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and director of the Office for International Relations. He recalls that the most life-changing moment in Adamson happened when he was assigned as University Treasurer for the first time. He describes the years 1983-1987 as *annus terribilis* (Latin for 'a terrible or dreadful year') on the Philippine political scene. Those years marked the last few and the most terrible years of the Martial Law regime in the Philippines, with the assassination of Benign "Ninoy" Aquino in 1983. Br. Henry narrated that student activism had greatly emerged and rallies, demonstrations, and unionism were happening everywhere. In the first



two weeks of August 1986, faculty and employees were clamoring for salary increase while the students were demanding lower tuition fees. As the University Treasurer, he was stuck in between, having no idea of what to do. The rest is history but after those harrowing events, he felt that he had grown ten years older. Br. Henry hopes that someday he can contribute to making the world a better place to live in by helping alleviate poverty and most especially, making people happy. He did not become a teacher, an accountant, or an agriculturist but became a Lay Religious - a blessing to other people's lives in ways no one could ever imagine.

*source: TOUCHSTONE, Vol. 11 no. 1
(August - December 2018)*

THE MISSION CONTINUES

At 9 a.m. on Saturday, February 21, family, friends and representatives of the Vincentian Family gathered at the Cathedral in Asunción, Paraguay to accompany our brother Diego Martinez, once a seminarian, then a deacon and now a priest.

About 100 people who were allowed by protocol to attend the ceremony were present. It was also transmitted via social networks.

The celebration was filled with emotion from the beginning to the

end. The day has come, so long awaited by Diego, and by all those who were fortunate enough to know him and share in this process with him. Today, this process has come to an end, by the grace of God, as he was ordained.

Monsignor Edmundo Valenzuela, Archbishop of Santísima Asunción, who presided the Eucharist and through the consecratory prayer he granted our brother the order of the presbyterate. Diego Martinez, a priest of the Congregation of the Mission.

In his words of gratitude our brother

could not hold back his emotion at the moment of recognizing himself as a Vincentian missionary priest. He expressed his enormous gratitude to God as he allowed him to be part of the Little Company.

Father Diego shared his desire to be an instrument of the merciful father with everyone present, to bring the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to all. This is his greatest motivation.

After the mass we went to the Vincentian seminary, where we shared lunch with Father Diego. The joyful atmosphere, the sunny day and a large united family were the reflection of a memorable day. Not forgetting those who were not able to attend, but who accompanied us in untiring prayer from wherever they could. All of us, heaven and earth, rejoiced. Especially our founder St. Vincent de Paul, for this new priest will carry on the Vincentian charism and continue the mission of Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor.

Agustín Barattini, seminarian



NEW PRIESTS IN FIJI

Our ordination preparation committee made up of Natovians and majority Nausorians with Cm reps started working since November 2020. The logistics is always the challenging bit amidst all the COVID 19 restrictions. The not knowing what will happen next was always the hardest to comprehend. Any other serious hit of COVID 19 or sudden appearance of a Tropical Cyclone would jeopardize everything. We always had a plan B and C (possibly a D!!!) Our 3 parishes, Natovi, Nausori with Kadavu all came in numbers and their respective food contributions. The young and old gathered in faith and for the subsequent celebrations. I actually thought we would downsize in the numbers in attendance!

When the day actually arrived, the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was packed inside and flowing outside. It was unbelievable. There were approx. 20 clergy on the altar representing different congregations. Viserio sang the psalms beautifully and Pateresio was one of the trios on the Litany of Saints. Waisale was our driver for the deaf with Kadavu contingent and Vili was the backUp support. I was moved. We were all moved. From the outset, the hard times we have had and yet, the colossal crowd came out of their faith convictions towards the Vincentians community in our connectedness to their joys and struggles. We would have fed approximately 1500 people that came to join



us at the St Joseph the Worker School grounds, Nakasi, with over 300-400 people who turned up for refreshments at the Cathedral Crypt after the ordination. We would have mobilise approx 300 lay collaborators to help us on the ground. Our conferers Fili, Kaituu, Jefferey and Lario were impeccable in their contributions. It was faithtastic!

The liturgy was amazing. Sr Carmel Pilcher RSJ our PRS liturgist was deletesuper impressed.. There were lots of affirming comments. Fr Simon Mani MSC PRS Rector attended the two first masses for Thomas and Manu and was just happy with the kind of support the Vincentians were getting. It is amazing to see the humbleness of our people and the display of their

faith. Again it was an opportune blessing to break bread and share from a common table with the deaf, the blind, wheelchair users, our special friends on the streets and the rest of the people of God. We could not complain but give thanks to God for our newest confreres, Manu and Thomas and their respective families. The Archbishop gave a very good homily on St Vincent de Paul and cited some of our works that are visible on the ground with the deaf, with cyclone relief work, women on the streets, and the Nausori Parish hall for housing market vendors who come from the mountains of Naitasiri, Tailevu and the Rewa Deltas. We could only thank everyone for journeying with us and responding with such fervor and their generosity of family spirit.



boat and our second lot travel tomorrow on the passenger liner. All other Natovians and Nausorian affiliates travel back today. It's been a weekend of hope, faith and joy!

Please pray for John Anifaemamu as he departs from Manilla today and travels to Solomon Islands. Please pray for Simon Pindi and Michael Nihonipo in their respective pastoral communities.

Thank you again for prayers and confidence/trust placed in us.

Blessings!

Joseva N Tuimavule C.M.

We are a small community of men on mission in Fiji, yet we have done this together by walking and working with our lay family. I am forever grateful to our parishioners and conferrers of Natovi, Nausori and Kadavu. They have done well. Our FamVin spirit was unbreakable as we rose together from the ashes of Ash Wednesday and ensured all was done well when we celebrated Laetare Sunday. Lenten Season had brought us some sense of renewal.

Our two newest Priests will now have a month of "thanksgiving masses" and some holidays with their respective families.

We have the passion week coming up and have allocated supplies to our existing apostolates and some to the diocesan parishes.

We are a bit tired. But it's Monday, normalcy yet again kicks in. PRS lectures resumes today! Our first contingent of Kadavuans travelled early morning today by fibre

For their first masses, Thomas and Manu had theirs in Nausori and Tamavua respectively! Their respective families hosted the thanksgiving lunches. Again the generosity of family Vincentian spirit. We were all again struck with the family blessings on how the families came forward on the thanksgiving celebrations. Some of us had to go to both places. In the end it was just as prayerful and beautiful. Both the Lanyon and Naigulevu families fed the masses that gathered, adhering to health instructions of Covid 19. Both days were streamlined.



VSO Forum on **VINCENTIAN DEVELOPMENT 2021**

Vincentian Solidarity Office (VSO)

St. Vincent considered fundraising as an important means for showing the poor that they are loved. Fundraising for projects can help a mission buy a boat, equip a computer room, distribute protective masks, teach gospel values, generate income, and train youth for meaningful work. It's challenging work if you are just beginning. That's why the VSO is offering to help confreres who want to begin this work or get better at fundraising for projects. Do you want to put smiles on the faces of the elderly, parents, children and youth? The VSO wants more confreres to do what we already are doing through our office, and please God, to accomplish ever greater initiatives.

The VSO is pleased to announce our Forum on Vincentian Development to train confreres as project managers. The goal of this training is,

1. To introduce project-based fundraising for mission work with the VSO;
2. To design a project that solves a clear problem within the community;
3. To develop a budget and funding plan; and
4. To incorporate methods of management and evaluation that result in a report to the funding agencies and VSO.

The VSO has contracted AVISHA – a learning platform that can be accessed by internet. The training consists of 10 virtual sessions in English from



May 25 to July 2. An expert in project management will present the training. Participants will be able to join live or watch recordings at their convenience. They will learn to design, manage, and report on projects. During the training, the participants will be guided in the various steps of designing a project. By the end of the training, participants will have prepared a project application for their own ministry. The VSO is taking care of all costs for this training. The participants only need to have their own stable internet connection and preferably, a What's App account. We have a limited number of openings still. Any confrere (or even lay collaborators) interested in participating should first contact their Visitor to be recommended.

The VSO is following St. Vincent's example of equipping confreres to evangelize and serve the poor

by learning about project-based fundraising. In the years ahead, the Forum will be offered in French and Spanish also. Please pray for the success of this initiative to train confreres in this rewarding work.

GENERAL INFORMATION

NOMINATIONES / CONFIRMATIONES

RANDRIANANTENAINA Césaire	23/03/2021	Director HC MADAGASCAR
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ORDINATIONES

LANYON Thomas	Sac	AUL	13/03/2021
NAIGULEVU Samson Imanueli Tadu	Sac	AUL	13/03/2021
NGENDAKUMANA Samuel	Sac	COL	21/03/2021

NECROLOGIUM

Nomen	Cond.	Dies ob.	Prov.	Aet.	Voc.
DIAS José Lázaro	Fra	08/02/2021	FLU	80	59
VOCKING Antoon Gerard Maria (A.G.M.)	Sac	01/03/2021	CNG (HOL)	82	59
D'ERCOLE Giovanni	Sac	03/03/2021	ITA	81	63
KOZŁOWSKI Mieczysław	Sac	17/03/2021	POL	72	52
GAN Constancio	Sac	21/03/2021	PHI	85	65

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Congregation of the Mission

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